him until further orders. As I said we are looking for a replacement. Also, we are looking into the entire question of sports organisations in the country. I cannot say anything at the moment by way of a commitment because the matter is still under examination.

PROF. C. LAKSHMANNA : The Minister in his written answer has stated that 'until further orders ....' and '31st January...' and '...in view of his experience in the Sports Authority of India...' which gives the impression that he has been continued because of his experience. But while answering the supplementary, he stated that they are looking out for a replacement. I would like to ask the Minister as to what is the exact reason for continuing the present incumbent. Is it because of his experience that he continues or is it because he continues till they find another person ?

SHRI. P.V. NARASIMHA RAO : Both are correct reasons. He has been there till 31st January. Now we want a replacement. We cannot leave the whole thing in a vaccum. We are looking for the replacement. He has been there already and in view of his experience, we are continuing him. That is the position.

श्री जगदम्बी प्रसाद यादव : माननीय सभापति जी, भारतीय खिलाड़ी खास कर ऐथलेटिक्स की दुनिया में अभी तक कोई विशेष स्थान नहीं बना पा रहे हैं। इसलिये भारत सरकार ने यह सोचा था कि ग्रामीण अंचलों से टेलेंन्ट की खोज की जाए। लेकिन जैसा कि माननीय श्री कलमाडी जी ने कहा कि सारा पैसा केन्द्र के हाथ में हैं, प्राधिकरण के हाथ में हैं। अखिल भारतीय स्तर पर इस काम को करने के लिये यह पैसा एक ही हाथ में होने से काम नहीं चलेगा। इसलिये मैं माननीय मंत्री जी से यह जानना चाहता हूं कि आपने जो योजना बनाई है कि गांव-गांव से जहां पर टेलेन्ट मिल सकती है उनको सेलेक्ट करके उनसे तैयारी कराई जाए, उसके बारे में आप क्या कर रहे हैं ताकि हमारा इतना बड़ा देस ऐथलेटिक्स में भी गौरवपूर्ण स्थान प्राप्त कर सके ? क्या आपको इसकी चिन्ता हैं, आपने इस पर विचार किया है ?

श्री पी० वी० नरसिंह राव : मान्यवर, इस बारे में कई योजनायें बन चुकी हैं और बन रही हैं। हम तो चाहते हैं कि जब नई पालिसी की घोषणा होगी तो उसमें इसकी भी घोषणा करें। मैं आशा करता हूं कि उसमें इसका भी समावेश किया जाएगा कि पढ़ाई के साथ साथ खेलों को भी पूरा प्रोत्साहन दिया जाय। यह केवल किसी बड़े शहर में ही नहीं बल्कि गांव के स्तर से शुरू करके जहां पर जो भी खेलों के मामले में टैलेंट होगी उसको प्रोत्साहन दिया जाएगा। उसको परवान चढ़ा कर हमारे देश का जो स्तर है उसे ऊंचा करने की कोशिश की जाएगी, यह निश्चय में हमारी पालिसी है।

श्री वीरेन्द्र वर्मा : श्रीमन्, इसमें मेरा भी नाम था।

Sethusamudram Project

*247. SHRI L. GANESAN :
SHRI V. GOPALSAMY :†

Will the Minister of TRANSPORT be pleased to state :

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the news item published in the 'Hindu' of the 27th January, 1986 under the caption 'Sethusamudram project vital for Mangalore Port' ;

(b) whether Government have taken a final decision to include this project in the Seventh five year Plan for the benefit of Cochin, Madras, Tuticorin, Goa and Visakhapatnam ports etc; and

(c) if not, what are the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (SHRI RAJESH PILOT) : (a) Yes, Sir.

†The Question was actually asked on the floor of the House by Shri V. Gopalsamy.

(b) The project has not been included in the Seventh Five Year Plan.

(c) Due to constraints of funds.

SHRI V. GOPALSAMY : Mr. Chairman, Sir, this most vital Sethusamudaram project is pending for the past 120 years. On the recommendations of the Ramaswamy Mudaliar Committee the project was cleared in the Union Cabinet meeting on 13th September, 1963. It was sanctioned for advance action, but when there was an unreasonable request from Sri Lanka not to carry on with the project as it will hamper their own economic interest, this project was shelved. The hon. Minister has now said that there are constraints of funds. Sir, this is not a development project. This is a project which is very vital for security reasons, in the interest of India. So, when there is a will there will be a flow of funds also, but there is no will from your side. That is why you are talking about the constraints of funds. Will the Minister reconsider this, to get the sanction from the Cabinet and get the project cleared this year itself ?

SHRI RAJESH PILOT : Mr. chairman, I do share the feeling of the hon. Member. Government is aware of the importence of the project, but because of the funds we are still on the way to take a decision.

SHRI V GOPALSAMY : Mr. Chairman, Sir there is a grave threat from Indian Ocean to the security of India. This is because of the U.S. presence in Diego Gracia and attempt to get in Trincomalee another base. These ships have to go via Sri Lanka, that will come within the striking range of Sri Lanka. For these reasons, for strategic and security reasons, will the Government take an immediate decision to implement this vital Sethusamudram project. If it is implmented, these ships need not go via Sri Lanka.

SHRI RAJESH PILOT : As I have mentioned, when Government considers things, all factors affecting the security, economic and other factors are considered. I have said that Government is aware of the importance of this project but . . .

SHRI V. GOPALSAMY: Had you realised, you would not have said about constraints of funds.

SHRI RAJESH PILOT : I assure you that Government is equally keen and interested (*Interruptions*). I certainly share your feelings on the subject.

SHRI ALADI ARUNA *alias* V. ARUNACHALAM : The Sethusamudram project is pending as long back as 24 years. Our Chief Minister, Puratchi Thalavir MGR, has written a letter to the Prime Minister requesting him to include this project in the Seventh Five Year Plan. Our Chairman, when he was in charge of the Defence portfolio, while answering to a Calling Attention question, has given an assurance about this project on the floor of the Lok Sabha. The question was asked by Shri Kosalram. His assurance has been thrown to winds. So, I would like to know whether this Government would give positive response to the letter written by our Chief Minister, Puratchi Thalaviar MGR, for inclusion in the Seventh Five Year Plan and implement the assurance of our Chairman when he was the Defence Minister.

SHRI RAJESH PILOT : It is a fact that assurance has been given and what I have expressed in my answer is the sentiments and the feelings of the Government. We want it, we are concerned with it. If the Government were not interested we could have said, no. But it is because of the funds that we are saying, no. So, because of these

problems we are unable to take a positive decision as yet. Otherise, we are still very keen to do it.

SHRI R. MOHANARANGAM: I am very glad to listen to the answer of our hon. Minister where he has stated that the Government realises the importance of the project and they are considering it. On January 15, 1986, I have received a letter from Minister of State/incharge Planning Commission stating that the proposal regarding Sethusamudram Shipping Canal project was examined in the Planning Commission. However, it was not found viable in financial or economic terms.

When this is the answer, I do not know how the Minister says that the Government realises the importance of this project. When I was the Industries Minister in Tamil Nadu, Sir, you were the person who found out the file from the shelf and wrote a letter to the Government of India about the importance of this. They have assured you in a letter that the Government of India would definitely take this matter into consideration. What is the reply of the Minister to this ?

SHRI RAJESH PILOT : The Planning Commission has said what the hon. Member has said and this is the information with us also. But still Government is very keen and Gvernment has its importance in mind. That is why we are still...

MR. CHAIRMAN : Question Hour is over.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

Threat of Strike by the U.S. based staff of Air India

*248. SHRI SUSHIL CHAND MOHUNTA :
SHRI RAM NARESH KUSHAWAHA :

Will the Minister of TRANSPORT be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that Air India operations in the North American sector have been incurring losses and the airlines is facing strike threat by its US based staff ;

(b) if so, what is the loss suffered by Air India on the North American sector during the last three years stating the reasons therefor ; and

(c) what are the reasons for discontentment among the US based Air India Staff and what remedial steps have been taken in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI JAGDISH TYTLER): (a) and (b) Even though operations of Air India in the North American Sector have been generating surplus over Cash Costs. there is an overall loss on this sector due to high fixed costs. Government is not aware of any strike threat by U.S.A. based staff of Air India The profitability profile of the India U.S.A. sector for the past three years is as under :—

(Rs. in lakhs)

	1984-85	1983-84	1982-83
Operating Revenue	15823·98	14620·17	13850·29
Cash Costs	11908·00	10746·07	10562·57
Surplus over cash costs	3915·98	3874·10	3287·72
Profit/(Loss)	(63·00)	67·00	(52·00)